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Elizabeth & Kenneth Fraser • Kanata • Oct. 30
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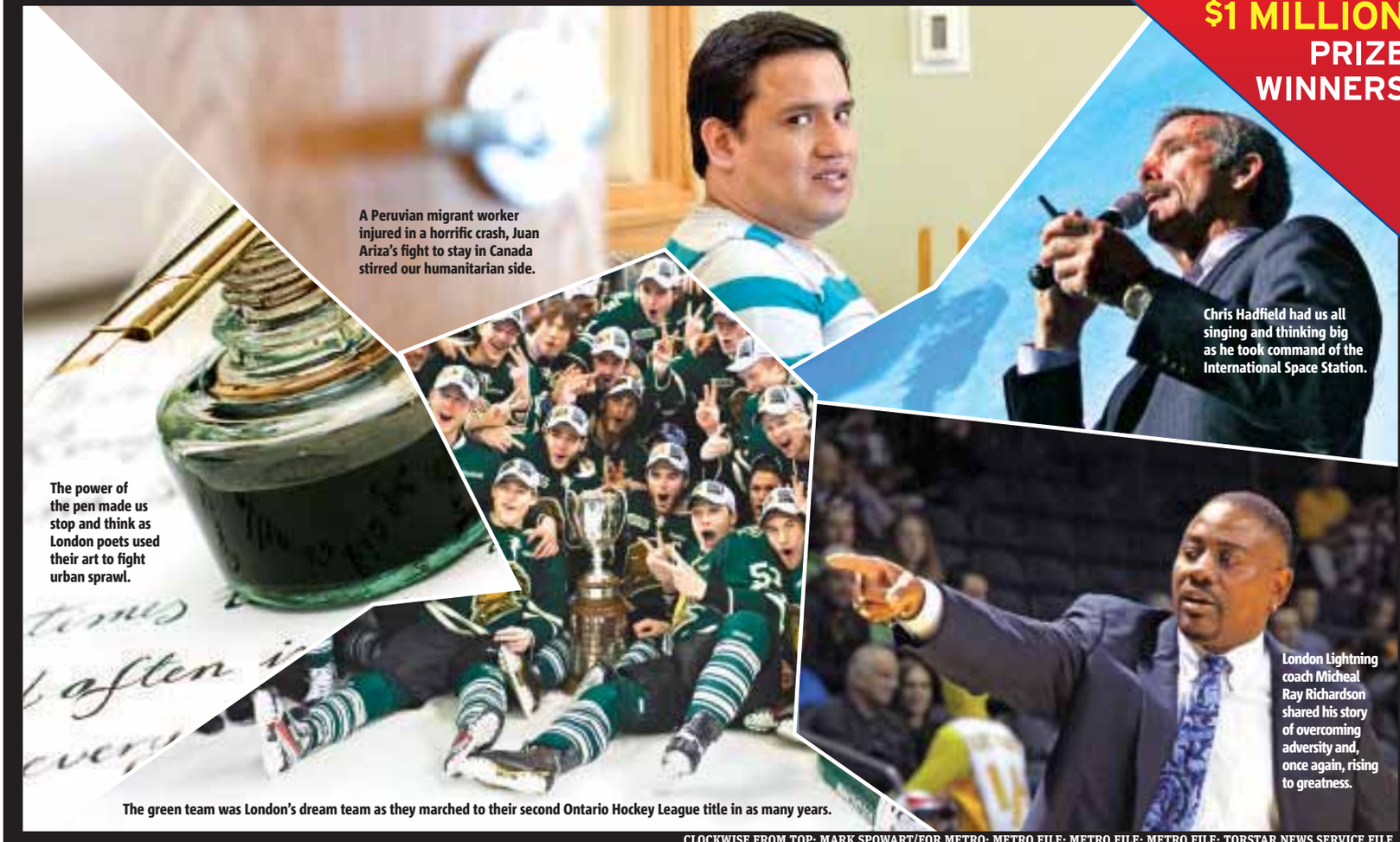

A Peruvian migrant worker injured in a horrific crash, Juan Ariza's fight to stay in Canada stirred our humanitarian side.

Chris Hadfield had us all singing and thinking big as he took command of the International Space Station.

The power of the pen made us stop and think as London poets used their art to fight urban sprawl.

London Lightning coach Micheal Ray Richardson shared his story of overcoming adversity and, once again, rising to greatness.

The green team was London's dream team as they marched to their second Ontario Hockey League title in as many years.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: MARK SPOWART/FOR METRO; METRO FILE; METRO FILE: METRO FILE; TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

MOVING MOMENTS

THE STORIES THAT TOUCHED LONDON AND THE NATION IN 2013

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Local

London reporters choose their most impactful stories of 2013.

Readers' online selections

Dancing and clubbing: Voted 'proudest' stories by you, via the Metropolitan Panel

Western U students do the Harlem Shake

In Feburary, 300 Western University students got the shakes at the same time and danced up a storm at the UCC, Harlem Shake style. Videos of people doing the dance — popularized in a lyric by rapper Cam'ron — started popping up on YouTube in early 2013. METRO

Club Rouge to Gatsby Sound House & Bar

In August, Fanshawe and Western students were allowed back in the old Club Rouge location.

The Piccadilly Street bar got new ownership, a new name, a new look and a rediscovered desire for students and the revenue it brings.

Former owner John Scott-Pearse barred students in 2012 because he claimed they bring more trouble than they're worth. His biggest beef was his contention that students drank all night at home, and then went to his bar to cause trouble.

That was then.

New owner Nick Spina, 23, changed the name to Gatsby Sound House & Bar and the attitude towards students.

For the Sept. 6 opening students were very welcome.

By December the strategy seemed to be paying off, its Facebook page had more than 4,758 likes. Students gave an enthusiastic thumbs-up to the change in attitude. METRO

Leaf the trees alone — campaigning poet Penn Kemp. MIKE DONACHIE/METRO

Poet Penn Kemp a force of nature

Pick of the year.
London's former poet laureate inspires with her 'poetry activism' fighting the PenEquity big-box store project

MIKE DONACHIE
Metro reporter

A remarkable woman led a campaign to make a difference this year, and it was all about poetry.

Penn Kemp tried to turn words into actions as London council considered development plans for a woodlot near Highway 401.

In the end, she couldn't stop politicians from giving the green light to the PenEquity big-box store project, but that hasn't stopped Kemp from redoubling her efforts in what she calls "poetry activism."

London's former poet laureate promised to keep campaigning on green issues, in politics and for social justice, through her poems and plays in 2014.

Whatever side you take in the planning debate that was — unfairly — simplified as "jobs versus trees," it's hard to deny that Kemp is herself a force of nature.

The idea of using poetry to win hearts and minds was irresistible. There were bigger stories in news value, but the sheer idealism involved in this one made it the story of the year for me.

So why harness poetry to make a point?

"I think it dares the reader to participate in the creative process," said Kemp. "It really is a challenge to think beyond one's usual prejudices.

"And it's also a reaction in words of outrage or of sorrow or of celebration.

"Poetry is used communally for the important passages of our life. It's used to celebrate marriage or witness funerals, like the outburst of song for (Nelson) Mandela.

"It's a really heightened awareness at really heightened times of passage in a mortal's life.

"We turn to heightened language and that heightened language is poetry."

And long may it keep speaking to human hearts.

The Chinese Year of the Snake

Penn Kemp provided Metro with a new poem summing up the year that was.

2013 was a year that lived up to its rep:
Triskaidekaphobia, the fear of thirteen.
The Year of a sly and slippery Snake.
Mayoral scamps, provincial buffoons
(without any idea of consequence since
taxpayers would pay for their mistakes)
and federal about-to-be felons in office.
2013 was the year that backpackers no
longer sported a proud Canadian flag to
distinguish themselves from Americans
abroad. Remember when we brokered
Peace instead of breaking our word?
When neighbours trusted one another
rather than spy on friends near and far?
We supported Nelson Mandela early on.
But Apartheid learned from our treatment
of First Peoples how to apply shrouds of
secrecy, neglect and worse in the name of
transparency. Elder Brother is watching.
Chris Hadfield had to go through Customs
coming back from Space, so the Russians
declare. I hope he was whistling ISS (Is
Somebody Singing). Someone's certainly
crying for truth and then for reconciliation.
For 2013 was the year when the very rich
became richer and the entire middle class
disappeared into the working poor while
the poor got lost in a fast shuffle of Cuts.
We're ending this year with a sigh, not a
bang nor a whimper. With a hope that next
year, first truth and real reconciliation will
be realized. If we take the next step and act
for social justice, for swift democratic reform.

Concern for migrant lasts beyond the pages

Catch-22. After a horrific collision left Juan Ariza unable to continue his work on a Hampstead farm, visa issues left him far from his ill wife and young son

SCOTT TAYLOR
Metro reporter

I was just about to complete my shift in the newsroom when I heard what sounded to be a serious crash on the police scanner.

It was just before 5 p.m. on Feb. 6, 2012.

As will often happen when something grave is unfolding, chatter on the scanner rapidly increased between Ontario Provincial Police, county firefighters, EMS and, I soon heard, Ornge dispatch personnel. I soon heard reports of "multiple" casualties.

To be honest, it sounded like hell had broken loose in the hamlet of Hampstead, a farming community near Stratford. It turns that's just what was happening.

By the morning, the clarity of the crash was unavoidable. Eleven dead, three critically injured.

Among the dead: Ten migrant workers, most from Peru, who were working at a chicken farm, and a London truck driver, who was on his way home to celebrate his 11th wedding anniversary with his wife.

After writing the initial stories in the immediate aftermath of the collision, I found myself staying in touch with one of the survivors.

That brings us to November 2013 when, again, I was touched by the story — a chance to write about one of the victims returning home in what has become a heartbreaking Catch-22.

Juan Jose Ariza, a husband and father in his 30s, ended up living in a London long-term care facility for nearly two years, as he recovered from his injuries.

Aside from his physical issues, Juan faced one more battle that has yet to be won or lost to this day. Unable to work such a physically demanding job on the chicken farm, his work visa expired.

The Canadian government allowed him to stay for his ongoing medical care because he had been hurt on the job in Canada, but if he went home to see his wife and son he wouldn't be allowed to return because he had no visa.

If he did go home to Peru, he wouldn't be able to find a job there because of his limitations. His dream was — and still is — to bring his family here, where he could get a job using his brain instead of his brawn.

As Ariza tried to work something out with the Canadian government, his wife had dangerous surgery near her brain stem, leaving their eight-year-old son alone much of the time.

He could take it no longer.

He finally returned home this year, but the story isn't over yet. Advocates for Ariza, including a London MP, a pastor and a lawyer, continue the fight for him.

Immigration has his file, and it's believed there might be reason to be optimistic that he and his family will be allowed to return on humanitarian grounds.

The only thing certain at this time, though, is that there will be more to report over the coming months.

From the original story ...

Ariza and 12 other migrant workers had finished their shift of vaccinating chickens when their extended van ran a stop sign and was crushed by a truck driven by a London man, who also died. Only Ariza and two other workers survived the carnage.

- "My son was too lonely and was in a deep depression because my wife had surgery and I was in Canada," he said from Peru. "I had to make a decision to return for my family."
- "I can't find a job in Peru and I can't give a future for my family," he said. "That's what worries me the most."

Juan Ariza with his wife, Edith, and son, Flavio. The Canadian government allowed Ariza to stay for ongoing medical care because he had been hurt on the job in Canada, but he was told if he went home to see his wife and son he wouldn't be allowed to return because he had no visa. CONTRIBUTED

Readers' online selections

You told us — via our Metropolitan Panel — which online stories affected you most

Saddest

Fanshawe-bound teen killed in London was 'always smiling'

Josie Ainsworth was a vibrant 17-year-old who moved from the Ottawa Valley to attend classes at Fanshawe College in the fall. A week after she arrived, she was killed by a car while crossing the street to catch a bus.

"She was always smiling, always the life of the party," said Katie Vanderbraak, a longtime friend. "No one saw her with a frown on her face. And she had such a big heart. She had a boyfriend at Fanshawe and I've never seen someone more in love." METRO

Western U student's disappearance a mystery

Police were searching for a missing Western student in March. Noah Kishinevsky, 19, was supposed to meet friends but didn't show up. Two days later police found his body in a parked car at a high rise. It was suspected he took his own life. METRO

Frothiest

'Suspicious package' sparks concern downtown

Police spent four hours in downtown's Ivey Park investigating what they believed to be a "suspicious" package. Turns out, it wasn't a package at all. It was a small camera that had been taped to a bike path guardrail near the Thames River foot bridge. However it got there, the camera caused a stir. METRO

For original stories, head to metronews.ca

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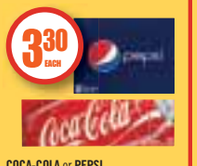

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National Rob Ford, Senate scandal, Toilet Squirrel: 2013 was a big year. Here's the stories that called us to action, made us laugh or impacted our lives in other ways.

Metro story helps mentally ill man secure himself a new home

KATE WEBB
Metro reporter

JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO IN VANCOUVER

'Hundred times better'

When asked to update a story that impacted me over the last year, I Immediately thought of Stephen Chalmers. I interviewed him again last month.

The walkway up to his new trailer sparkles with red and blue Christmas lights, and on clear nights moonlight spills through tall pine trees onto the quiet campground where he has lived for nearly two months now.

The 54-year-old is still getting used to his new surroundings after moving out of a dilapidated trailer at the run-down Beladean Trailer Park in Surrey, B.C., which lost power in September due to an improperly supervised motel demolition.

"I'm 100 times better. I feel better, I sleep better," says Chalmers, who suffers from multiple mental illnesses and lives on a meagre disability income.

New digs, old issues

After Metro ran stories on the outage, and the fact that he could n't find a new park willing to take his old, leaky trailer, an online campaign raised enough to buy him a newer, 1999 fifth-wheel.

But the complex problems of a man who has overcome crack addiction and alcoholism and still struggles daily with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder cannot be neatly resolved with four walls of aluminum and vinyl. Some days he feels up, some days he feels down, he says. The weather, getting used to his new neighbours, and the stress of living low-income — all of these have an effect on his moods.

But Chalmers says he seeks help when he needs it, from the mental-health care system, from friends, and from a local food bank.

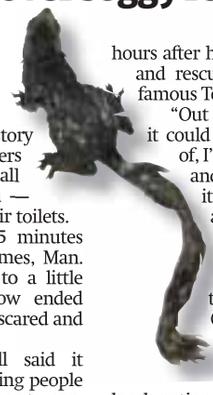
Moving on up

"I feel more positive about myself," Chalmers tells Metro. "I'm more sure of myself. I feel more personable towards myself... I think of myself as someone who actually deserves to be respected, which — that's kind of foreign territory to me."

Stephen Chalmers, who he says he is proud that by sharing his story publicly he has become someone people approach for advice about how to seek help.

Toilet Squirrel. 'Peg newsroom goes nuts over soggy rodent

BERNICE PONTANILLA
Metro reporter



It was the summer story that had Winnipeggers — and likely others all over North America — looking warily at their toilets.

And it led to 15 minutes of fame for a St. James, Man. woman, all thanks to a little critter that somehow ended up in her toilet wet, scared and clinging for dear life.

Angela Campbell said it was her love of making people laugh that spurred her to contact Metro Winnipeg only hours after her encounter with and rescue of the now infamous Toilet Squirrel.

"Out of all of the toilets it could have climbed out of, I'm glad it was mine and that I could help it," said Campbell in a December interview with Metro.

Once Metro Winnipeg broke the story online, Campbell was inundated with requests for interviews from local, national and international media outlets.

Metro's choice

Starman blows our minds

HENRIETTA WALMARK
Metro copy editor

Commander's log — stardate: 04-12-2013: "Here am I floating in my tin can/A last glimpse of the world/Planet Earth is blue and there's nothing left to do."

Few events in 2013 eclipsed Chris Hadfield's cover of David Bowie's Space Oddity. The video of the astronaut literally floating in his "tin can" as he sang his farewell to life aboard the International Space Station capped an extraordinary mission of firsts.

As the ISS orbited Earth, he tweeted stunning photos of the planet, chatted with William Shatner, shared videos of zero-gravity science experiments, did Q&A's with kids via satellite-links and performed an interspace duet with Ed Robertson.

Hadfield was having the time of his life, and took us along for the ride.

But what's really cool is what's been left trailing in the stardust. Hadfield allowed me and millions of others to experience Earth and the universe as never before, sparking our imagination and reigniting interest in the final frontier as a space worth exploring.

Readers' online selections

Extra-terrestrials? Nose picking? What is this, you ask? Well, it's what you told us — via our Metropolitan Panel — were your favourite Metro online national news stories of the year

UFO sightings double in Canada

Ufology Research issued its Canadian UFO survey in May and the stats revealed reported sightings doubled in 2012. "Polls have shown that one in 10 Canadians believe they have seen a UFO. That's three to four million people with UFO experiences," said Chris Rutkowski of Ufology. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

T.O. man calls for stem-cell donations

In July, Chris Taylor of Toronto called on healthy 17- to 35-year-olds to become stem-cell donors. "I need one, it turns out, to save my life," he told Metro. "More importantly, it's for everyone who needs one." OneMatch is a program run by Canadian Blood Services which matches potential stem-cell donors to unrelated patients. Donors sign up for free and get a package in the mail containing a swab kit.
METRO

Nose pickers, rejoice

If you don't like gross things, this story is snot for you.
An associate professor of biochemistry at the University of Saskatchewan is trying to get more students interested in science by looking at the health benefits of picking your nose and eating it. Scott Napper says mucous traps germs and stops them from getting into our body, but if we consume that mucous, it could help train our immune system by exposing it to the germs.
THE CANADIAN PRESS/CKOM

New rules for Canuck drivers

In early 2012, this came in from the department of red tape you didn't know existed: Canadians were required by law to have an international driving permit in addition to their regular licences when driving in Florida. The new law applied to any non-resident, but has since been unanimously repealed by legislators.
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Readers' + Metro's choice

Teen-trafficking case lacked outrage

JESSICA SMITH CROSS
Metro reporter

Three girls ran away from a group home last year, lured away by a prostitution ring and put to work in Toronto.

That story, more than any I've covered, left an impact.

The girls were in the care of the province, in a place that was supposed to be secure. But there was no public outrage. Critics for both opposition parties knew few details of the case and the Ministry of Child and Youth Services simply said after the trial that safety would be "enhanced."

Is that it? I wanted to see someone in power care and hear some promises about how it will never be allowed to happen again.

Digital

Metro's digital team takes a look back at 2013 and shares some of their most memorable stories

The lighter side of the law. A dash of humour helps humanize VicPD

LUKE SIMCOE
Metro digital reporter

On the Metro digital desk, we're well aware that funny stories are more likely to be shared by our online readers; it's an insight we share with the Victoria Police Department.

Last year, when a naive Reddit user posted about buying marijuana at the University of Victoria, VicPD Const. Mike Russell was there.

Using the "VicPDCanada" handle, Russell announced himself with a simple "cough," reminding users that the long arm of the law extends online.

Since then, he and his partner Bowen Osoko have been working to build the force's social media cred.

And despite the serious nature of police work, the pair hasn't shied away from the absurdist humour endemic to Internet culture.

When cops busted drug dealers hiding cocaine in fake "Durasell" batteries in January, Russell penned a hilarious press release and offered tips to others looking to secure their stash.

"Don't forget to label it 'not drugs' so we don't inadvertently look inside," he said.

When handed the reins of the force's Twitter account in March, Osoko opted to spam followers with pictures of cats wearing hats.

"Being silly sometimes helps humanize our officers and make them more approachable. It's also just a lot of fun."

The Victoria Police Department has spammed Twitter followers with pictures of cats wearing hats, among other humorous tactics.
COURTESY VICPD

Cats with hats

"Being silly sometimes helps humanize our officers and make them more approachable. It's also just a lot of fun."
Bowen Osoko, Victoria Police Department

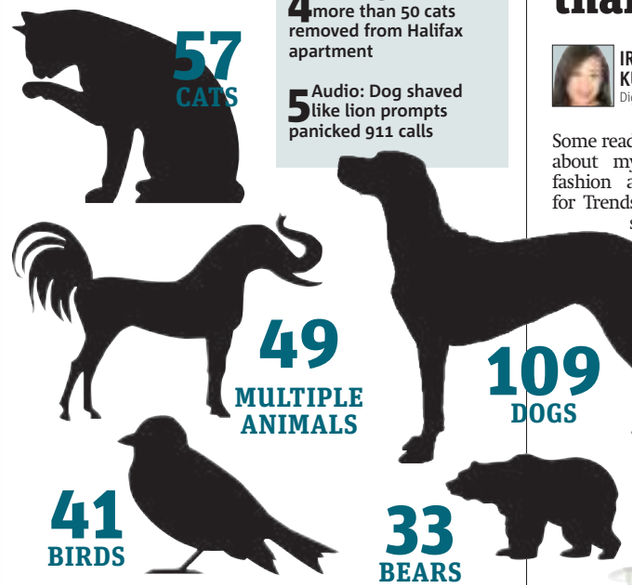
Which animal is top dog?

COLIN MCNEIL
Metro web editor

Animals. They're cute, they're cuddly, and they have a furry iron grip on the Internet. From the continuing antics of the Ikea monkey to the Toronto Zoo's pandas, it's been quite a year for Canadian fauna, but which four-legged friend is top dog at metronews.ca? The answer may give you paws for thought. There have been 539 stories on metronews.ca tagged "animals" in 2013. Here are the top 5 animals (by number of stories).

Top stories by views

1. Photos: Regina squirrels tangled by sticky situation
2. Warning: Graphic new images surface of GuZoo animal farm
3. Video: Elephant seal inhales meal in blink of an eye
4. Hoarding case sees more than 50 cats removed from Halifax apartment
5. Audio: Dog shaved like lion prompts panicked 911 calls



Irene Kuan's "sparrow face" selfies. CONTRIBUTED

Glymm. There's more to being a beauty editor than sparrow-face selfies

IRENE KUAN
Digital associate managing editor

Some readers have complained about my work as Metro's fashion and beauty blogger for Trends Report, labelling it sexist and shallow.

Granted, writing about "sparrow face selfies" and "bitchy resting face" doesn't suggest hard journalism, but the beauty industry is what it is.

In fact, if it hadn't been for an assignment reviewing beauty boxes, I would have never stumbled upon this story: One reader claimed she had been scammed by a subscription beauty box service called Glymm. The company charged her for a yearly subscription and then sent an abrupt email about their closure. It shuttered its business, website, Facebook and Twitter accounts, while keeping customers' money.

As a blogger, I care about my readers and their feedback.

I tracked the founder of Glymm using LinkedIn and badgered his secretary for information over the phone. I also used my ties as a beauty blogger to get reaction from other beauty-box businesses. After all, there were tons of irked Glymm subscribers in an industry that is still working to establish itself.

The week of April 25 the Glymm story generated more than 10,000 website views and 20,000-plus views on my Storify. It even prompted a company, Nail Polish Canada, to link to my story and provide free gifts to customers bilked by Glymm.

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International

From strange to serious — the world was a fascinating and often heartbreaking place in 2013.

Egypt

'An uncertain reality'

DEENA DOUARA
Metro copy editor

Calls to relatives in Egypt are reminders that while the deteriorating state of affairs — of people's spirits and dreams and savings — is frustrating to behold from here, it's an uncertain reality, a nightmare, over there.

I was there this summer, in the leadup to the anniversary of then-president Mohamed Morsi's inauguration. I tried to understand the arguments: Egyptians must protest; Egyptians must stay home and give him a fair chance.

I tried to capture that atmosphere for Metro, on TV and for Huffington Post, all garnering strong reactions.

As protests intensified, so did people's rhetoric. A prevalent "You're with us or with the terrorists" approach took root, serving to justify military crackdowns and delegitimize nuanced opinions that didn't conform neatly to "pro-military" or "pro-Muslim Brotherhood."

The 2011 revolution was one of the most dramatic scenes Egyptians witnessed in at least three decades. There was uncertainty and disagreement and plenty of anger. But I believe it is 2013 that really changed Egyptians. Mistrust, contempt, revenge, hatred — these sentiments are relatively new, and they are frightening.

As repression, imprisonment and censorship have seemingly increased alongside an ever-declining economy, Egyptians now must too fear their neighbours. And divided, they say, is how they fall.

An Egyptian woman reacts in Tahrir Square the day after former Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, the country's first democratically elected president, was ousted from power on July 4 in Cairo.
ED GILES/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Manning. The truth at what cost?

KEVIN HAMILTON
Metro copy editor

Chelsea Manning

Chelsea Manning is a name too quickly forgotten. This summer, the disgraced soldier was convicted of espionage for transferring classified U.S. military files to WikiLeaks. He received a 35-year sentence.

The biggest leak in U.S. history fuelled allegations of corrupt tactics, moral bankruptcy and outright war crimes. But the world instead fixated on WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and has now moved on to NSA leaker Edward Snowden. Manning was marginalized during her trial as her mental stability was called into question. And her announcement that she would live as a woman caused no end of distraction. All of this overshadowed what I think should be the true focus of the affair: ethics. Was Manning justified in breaking the law, potentially harming U.S. interests and possibly putting lives at risk in order to expose the truth? What acts are acceptable in the name of security? And how can a government remain accountable to its people while keeping its activities secret?

Keeping an eye on Syria

ALI ZAFAR
Metro copy editor

Nearly three years on, the Arab Spring has morphed into a disgruntled winter in Syria. While several Arab nations have toppled their dictators, Syria continues to be stuck between rebel strongholds and leader Bashar al-Assad.

Bearing the wrath of this power struggle are the citizens of the country. Around two million of them have been displaced, and Amnesty International estimates that more than 100,000 people have been killed since the conflict started in March 2011.

I've seen atrocities committed both in the name of religion and by iron-fist rulers while living in the Middle East and South Asia, which is why the plight of Syrians is something I can relate to. Being considered a religious minority in Pakistan, I can empathize with the woes of religious minorities in Syria who are worried about their country under the control of Islamist rebels. It's why I'll keep a close eye on stories coming out of Syria in 2014.

Steubenville

Victim blaming

JILLIAN BELL
Metro copy editor

For many rape victims, the rape itself is just the beginning of their nightmare. They are shamed and doubted. Their every action is questioned: What was she thinking wearing that skirt? Or drinking that much alcohol? This year, we saw the world rally around a rape victim in the Steubenville case. This was a refreshing, but an all-too-rare occurrence. If only every case of sexual assault generated such an uproar, perhaps more women would have the courage to report being raped, and more rapists would be held accountable.

Readers' online selections

Nothing hard-hitting here: Metro online readers gravitated towards a tiny-penis contest, the matrimonial woes of a Facebook couple, and a lion-like dog on the loose as their favourite international stories of 2013, as picked through our Metropolitan Panel

Interview with a smallest-penis contest winner

Meet Nick Gilronan: the winner of the Smallest Penis in Brooklyn. Gilronan entered the contest held in Kings County Bar in Brooklyn, N.Y., in August and came out on top despite the, uhh, stiff competition.
Anyway, you guys couldn't get enough of Metro's Q & A with this guy. METRO WORLD NEWS

Having same name apparently not the secret to a successful marriage

It took a simple Facebook message from one Kelly Hildebrandt to another Kelly Hildebrandt to get the wheels of love turning.
But it seems the two are no longer Facebook friends. The young couple filed for divorce in July. "How do they term it at the courthouse? Irreconcilable differences, that is what I would say," the male Hildebrandt told a newstation. "We gave it our best shot." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Dog shaved like lion prompts 911 call

A dog that has been shaved to look like a lion set off a panic in Norfolk, Va., in January. Three 911 calls came in on the same day reporting a lion wandering the streets. It's "roaming loose in the neighbourhood a few blocks from the zoo," one caller reported to the 911 dispatcher at 10:19 a.m. After the 911 calls, Norfolk police called the Virginia Zoo to make sure its lions were all accounted for. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

MSN messenger goes the way of ICQ

Microsoft's venerable Messenger program was moved to the great big recycling bin in the sky this year.
Users had until March 15 to migrate their accounts over to Skype, which the software company acquired in 2011.
At its peak, Messenger boasted 300 million users in more than 60 countries.
Microsoft will continue Messenger in China, due to the peculiar nature of the Chinese Market. METRO

Search for Germany's giant golden cookie

Found missing at the beginning of this year: one golden cookie, weighing around 20 kg. The rectangular gilded bronze sculpture was part of a statue gracing the facade of German cookie baker Bahlsen's Hannover office. A police statement said a newspaper received a picture showing someone in an outfit similar to Sesame Street's Cookie Monster holding a golden cookie. The sender wrote to demand cookies be delivered to children at a city hospital. Police were not sure at the time if it was the same cookie, or a real claim of responsibility.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

#omg! Readers all a-Twitter over TEMP

Canadian author Douglas Coupland, best-known for his groundbreaking novel Generation X, visited Metro's head office just before the launch of TEMP.

The 20-part fiction series was published in Metro throughout November. Here's how Metro readers responded on Twitter:

@jason_michael: A sincere heartfelt Thank You to @DouglasCoupland for TEMP. I am a temp working for the government and your words continue to inspire!

@Teyemtenot: yet another reason why Metro is my favourite thing to read in the morning!

@hurricanediana: thanks for keeping me entertained for 20 a.m. commutes. Funny, surprisingly thought-provoking and relevant.

@KaT4_2012: read TEMP every day! #youguysnailedit #precariousworkiseverywhere Douglas Coupland is brilliant

@morgancadenhead: The collaboration between @DouglasCoupland and @MetroNewsCanada is fascinating. A truly unique way to approach fiction.

@SuzanneMaryse: i am loving this! ... Coupland nails the post-modern condition once again

@ctmwyn: The best part about @DouglasCoupland #Temp is the high concentration of #CliffHangers #Serialization

METRO

Web editor Hannah Zitner chats with Douglas Coupland during the author's visit to Metro's head office in Toronto on Oct. 28. DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

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An eagle's eye for trends

Selebrating the selfie

LACY ATALICK
Metro copy editor

Two weeks after the Oxford Dictionary christened "selfie" as word of the year, an Australian eagle with a flair for the topical put the icing on the proverbial cake by stealing a video camera, recording its 110-kilometre journey and, oh yeah, snapping a selfie along the way.

Bloggers have long borne witness to the form's avant garde (viz. the duck face, the sparrow and the "squinch"), but as far as I'm concerned, the eagle's is so far the best, most transcendent, least filtered selfie. Its beak seemed to poke the camera's lens, to somehow pierce the scrim between parody and coincidence, and I couldn't help but laugh at what we've become.

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'The people's Pope.' Will Francis be a paragon of progressive papacy?

MIKE PALMA
Metro copy editor

Since not long after Pope Benedict XVI became the first Holy Father in centuries to quit his job, his successor, Francis, has captured headlines and hearts with his progressive approach to the papacy. I grew up Catholic, and his humility, his focus on the poor and his expressed tolerance of gays and non-believers has landed him in my good books as well.

But is Francis really a progressive symbol of an evolving Church? Time hailed him as "The People's Pope" in its Person of the Year cover story, and suggested he's "poised to transform" the Vatican. He's unquestionably been great PR compared to the previous pope, who struck me as harsher and more conservative than John Paul II before him. But how much power does Francis actually have to change things for good?

Pope Francis
FRANCO ORIGLIA/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Even if Francis makes the poor and downtrodden the focus of his entire papal career, his church remains strictly against homosexuality, divorce, contraception and abortion. Unless he's willing and able to change the official rules, I'm not sure I'll continue to find him so delightful.

Royally inundated

CAROL CHUNG
Metro copy editor

The arrival of Prince George of Cambridge was the most anticipated birth in the history of modern media. At least, that's the assumption you could make when looking back at the relentless press coverage of the royal pregnancy. Some readers were likely sick of hearing about Will and Kate's spawn long before he popped out of the womb, but it's hard to deny that Will and Kate's mix of wealth, privilege and youth is catnip for the masses, journalists like me included. If there's one thing we can take away from the baby bombardment it's that the British monarchy is in no danger of being dethroned, not with the press at

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Voices This is rare. Three Metro columnists are asked to write about their most memorable work this year. Turns out it can't be done without your feedback.

MY ONE LONG YEAR

JUST SAYIN'

Paul Sullivan
metronews.ca

Even though asking me to choose a favourite column is like asking me to proclaim a public preference for my goldfish over my hamster, I have dutifully reviewed Just Sayin' for the past year, and it turns out I have a lot to say, which might surprise a few people.

But I've managed to narrow it down.

Generally, I try to communicate my total bemusement with contemporary life. It's the best of times. It's the worst of times. It's the weirdest of times, right?

That makes for lots of material, such as:

CONTRIBUTED

Multi-billionaire Amazon's Jeff Bezos was in the news this year for buying the fabled Washington Post of Woodward and Bernstein fame for the equivalent of billionaire pocket lint: $250 million.

That's less, by the way, than what the Qatar Royal family paid for Impressionist painter Paul Cézanne's The Card Players — $259 million.

(Big deal. I paid $2.59 for The Card Players at the neighbourhood garage sale. I really love the look on the bulldog's face.)

ISTOCK IMAGES

Then there are those columns that are memorable for some really great bits, such as the one about the one-way expedition to Mars that was signing up potential colonists earlier this year:

"Therefore Mars One is looking for a special kind of person. Someone who is nuts enough to spend the rest of his or her life stuck in a climate-controlled hut the size of a portable toilet but well adjusted enough not to try to eat his or her fellow castaways."

What writing!

Of course, you can't write a column these days without having your own online anvil chorus, and I managed to hit a sour note writing about people who don't wear enough clothes on the beach. My protest went along aesthetic lines, not skin care, and the mob that formed outside my virtual door was not happy.

Here's just a taste: "Holy crap this is arguably the most ignorant thing I've ever read in my life."

You can't please all of the people all of the time, but if you try really hard, you can annoy all of the people all of the time.

Fortunately, I did manage to get an online standing O for a column I wrote about a movement to ban tipping that's just getting off the ground in New York and Chicago. One reader, named Crystal, gave me some unordinary positive feedback: "I don't usually write in to comment on articles of any sort, but after reading your brief article I had to say, very well written, entertaining, all the while thought-provoking. Excellent!"

Thanks, Crystal, I needed that. As you can tell, it's been a long year.

Reader writes

"After reading your brief article I had to say, very well written, entertaining, all the while thought-provoking." Crystal

2013 is over and I'm left holding the (mail)bag

HE SAYS

John Mazerolle
readers@metronews.ca

ISTOCK IMAGES

I've been told to pick one favourite 2013 column and reminisce, but my columns are like my children and once they're out in the world I will deny they are mine.

Instead, let's open the mailbag. After a year of columnastic genius I feel it's important for readers to provide a fresh perspective on how wonderful I am. For instance, one fan recently sent me a Facebook message that said my columns are "desperately TRYING to be funny. Alas, they just come off juvenile." To hear my work is desperately funny, yet childlike, is wonderful. I clicked on her page to thank her and learned she's graduated from "I didn't finish (2008)," which signals a level of brash independence and attention to detail I think we can all emulate. Under professional skills it said, "crack-smoking," which means she will soon be a writer (if she's joking) or the mayor of a large city (if she's not).

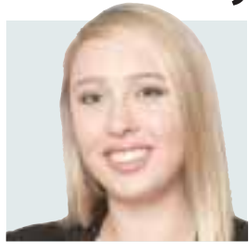
Mail moment

"Stupid yellow journalism at it's finest!!!" Online Fan

Another reader let me know my column is "pure dribble." I briefly assumed it was an insult and he had misspelled 'drivel.' Then I realized it was a basketball-related compliment, and that he considers me the Michael Jordan of Metro columnists. Pure, unadulterated dribble. Swish.

Some other actual mailbag highlights: * "Hypocrit much?" (More than you. I add an 'e.') * "Do your research." (No.) * "Stupid yellow journalism at it's finest!!!" (There are numerous problems here, but they are amply overcome by the use of three exclamation points. Bravo.) And that's the 2013 mailbag. See you next year, readers — older, but not wiser!!!

I swear, and I am a girl



SHE SAYS

Jessica Napier
@MetroSheSays

As 2013 comes to a close, it's fun to look back at some of the memorable columns I've written over the course of the year. Back in June, I wrote a piece about swearing in public. I described how my boyfriend and I had been reprimanded by an overbearing parent at a neighbouring table after dropping a few expletives during a Sunday brunch.

From the inbox

"I am saddened when I hear a young person, especially a young girl, making a public reference to parts of their body and their knowledge of sexual activity with obscenities."
Anonymous reader

I was hardly advocating for an uncivilized society full of foul-mouthed brutes, but the column definitely struck a nerve among our readers.

I received a few letters from people who identified swearing in public as a generational problem. One gentleman wrote an email stating, "I am saddened when I hear a young person, especially a young girl, making a public reference to parts of their body and their knowledge of sexual activity with obscenities."

I understand the importance of good manners, but I take offence to this notion that I should suppress any behaviour that is deemed 'unladylike' according to a 1950s standard.

ISTOCK IMAGES

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The good, the bad and the ugly

Year in review. The beginning of a new year, like the opening of a new film, holds so much promise... It's time for Metro to screen 2013's crop

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

It's time to bid farewell to 2013 with a look at the most disappointing films of the year.

Pacific Rim
Giant robots! Fighting giant sea monsters! Directed by Guillermo del Toro! This could've been so good, and obviously we thought it would be, but the results were just... not so much.

Only God Forgives
Maybe Nicholas Winding Refn was punishing people for liking his fantastic "Drive" too much, but this art-house meditation on masculinity, violence and retribution — we think? — was just a slog.

Star Trek Into Darkness
We might have been less disappointed in this long-awaited sequel if J.J. Abrams had just come out and said from the get-go that Benedict Cumberbatch was playing Khan. If only that were the only problem with it, though.

Jack the Giant Killer
Maybe it was foolish to expect Bryan Singer to do something cool and interesting with the old Jack and the Beanstalk fairy tale, but this one just fell flat.

Director Guillermo del Toro really dropped the ball on Pacific Rim — a movie that promised so much and delivered so little. CONTRIBUTED

Metro's picks

1. Gravity
2. Blue Jasmine
3. 12 Years a Slave
4. Hunger Games
5. Dallas Buyers Club

Oldboy
Spike Lee's plodding, uninspired remake of Park Chan-wook's 2003 cult classic at least makes a strong case for renting the original. Some things don't translate well, apparently.

Lovelace
A lot of foreplay that led to not very much of anything else, this exploration of the woman behind Deep Throat held too much back.

The Fifth Estate
Maybe it was too soon to explore the rise and fall of WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange, but it seemed perfectly reasonable that Bill Condon and Benedict Cumberbatch were up to the task. Apparently not.

Anchorman 2
Following up an iconic comedy is tough, but we're still not sure what Adam McKay and Will Ferrell were thinking with most of the choices here. Lesson learned: A little bit of Steve Carell's Brick Tamland goes a long way. Also, the film's jokes about racism and sexism actually just play as racist and sexist. Maybe next time, guys?

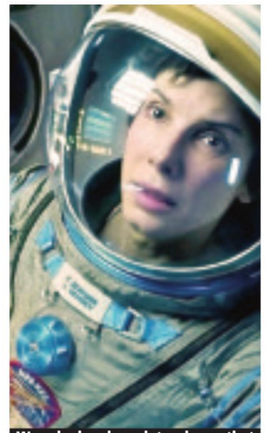
Enough Said
James Gandolfini's last leading film role, Julia Louis-Dreyfus' return to movies, another chance for Nicole Holofcener to examine adult relationships? This one had so much going for it. Too bad the end result is flat, uninspired and far too pleased with itself.

Metro pick

American Hustle

IN FOCUS
Richard Crouse
scene@metronews.ca

American Hustle's story of flim-flam men and women, the FBI and a real life sting known as Abscam has emerged as my favourite movie of 2013. It's an entertainingly audacious movie that will doubtless be compared to The Wolf of Wall Street because of the similarity in tone and themes, but this time around director David O. Russell has almost out-Scorsese'd Martin Scorsese. Add to that unexpected and compelling performances from the A-list ensemble cast — Christian Bale, Amy Adams, Jeremy Renner, Bradley Cooper and Jennifer Lawrence — and it adds up to the most fun I had at the movies this year.



We asked and you let us know that Gravity was your top movie pick for 2013. CONTRIBUTED

Reader's pick

What do you think? We recently polled Metro readers to see what film they considered to be the best of 2013. Gravity was the winner, hands down.

Happy Holidays!
Keep up to date this Holiday Season with the Metro News App, and at metronews.ca
Our print edition returns January 3rd.
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Top headlines of Hollywood's 2013

They did what? It was a shock-and-awe year in celeb gossip, and Metro's editors never hesitated to chime in on the tabloid chatter

Love them or hate them, it was hard to get off the blinged-out, baby-making bus that was Kimye this year. GETTY IMAGES

Pop culture gets a bad rap, according to Metro's gossip editor, Dorothy Robinson. Sure, it's lowbrow (especially when Miley Cyrus decides to take her clothes off with no deference to taste or talent) and it births fame-hungry monsters (Kimye, you are a creation even Walter Winchell couldn't dream up). Yet, the hijinks and disasters of people who fly so very high take us away from the humdrum of everyday life.

Keeping up with Miley is a nice distraction from the fact that the cable bill is due. Watching Beyonce at the Super Bowl is a reminder of what is humanly possible if you have drive, talent and a whole lot of luck. And witnessing the untimely deaths of two stars reminds us that even our little lives are ones worth living. In fact, maybe we're the lucky ones, blessed to be outside looking in — instead of the other way around.

Here is what some of our editors had to say about the year in gossip:

"I didn't put the Royal Baby on my list because I thought that fell under news. Come on: Kate Middleton should NEVER be on the same list as Miley or Kim Kardashian. And although Avril Lavigne marrying Chad Kroeger wasn't earth-shaking, it was so delightfully weird that I thought it deserved a mention." **DOROTHY ROBINSON**

Who wasn't confused by this Canadian coupling? GETTY IMAGES

"I, for one, definitely had fun to name her North.

Metro's picks

1. Miley Cyrus ditches her clean-cut image by twerking at the MTV awards, smoking a joint on air at the MTV Europe Awards, and working with photographer Terry Richards — and those are just some of her antics.
2. Amanda Bynes — see Liz Beddall's story to your right.
3. Kanye West and Kim Kardashian brought forth a baby and decided it would be fun to name her North.
4. Justin Beiber wreaked havoc in his neighbourhood with his driving, peed in a bucket, lost his monkey, and then had a drama-filled South American tour before heading to Australia for more of the same.
5. Angelina Jolie surprised the world by announcing she underwent a double mastectomy.

Beyonce winning the Super Bowl on my list. Nothing can stop her, not even a blackout. I don't even remember who actually played. All I remember is the Destiny's Child reunion and Beyonce's black lace body suit. She wins." **EMILY LAURENCE**

"I can't find any evidence supporting the theory that Kanye has a sense of humor; I fear he is gravely serious. We mere mortals just do not understand him." **T. MICHELLE MURPHY**

I guess unlike other calculated 'Look at me! I'm no longer a Disney pop princess! I'm now a woman!' coming-out moments (see: Britney in the red pleather body suit; Christina's suggestive Genie in a Bottle), Miley's coming out seems raw and unpolished. She's going more for shock value than sex appeal. Which, honestly, is slightly refreshing. Just put the tongue away, girlfriend." **DOROTHY ROBINSON**

Amanda on our minds

Reading between the Bynes

While it seems 2013 was the year of the squeaky-clean-songtress-turned-train-wreck-tabloid-queen, there was arguably no one who was featured as consistently on Metro's Dish page as former WB sweetheart Amanda Bynes.

Multiple brushes with the law, airborn bongs, driveway fires, neon wigs and one trainwreck of a Twitter feed meant that Bynes all too often became our feature focus.

Having recently received treatment for mental illness, we hope 2014 brings Amanda some peace, health and much-needed time away from the tabloids.

LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

Amanda Bynes GETTY IMAGES

Dorothy Robinson's picks

1. Miley Cyrus' crazy year.
2. The evolution of Kimye (and the birth of baby North West).
3. Beyonce wins the Super Bowl.
4. Cory Monteith overdosing.
5. Avril Lavigne marrying Chad Kroeger.

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HBO's Game belongs only on the Throne

TV. Whether you binge watched or faithfully tuned in, there were a number of great shows this year. Metro weighs in on what was tube-worthy in 2013

Alexandra Cavallo, our TV correspondent from south of the border, gives us her picks for the best shows on TV, however you may watch TV.

Game of Thrones
Game of Thrones had the best season ever. What other show has the balls to ruthlessly — and awesomely, creatively and bloodily — kill off multiple main characters like it ain't no thing? Game of Thrones reigns supreme. See what I did there?

House of Cards
Other than HBO (and FX and A&E and — well, damn, seems like television is killing it lately, huh?) Netflix is putting out some of the most exciting and game-changing programs. House of Cards — to put it simply — is utterly captivating, and this comes from a person, who, I admit it, doesn't even vote. Politics is not my thing. But this show has it all: intrigue, sex, violence, scandal and Kevin Spacey. Enough said.

Project Runway
Here's my shout-out to reality TV. I love reality it. I watch it all. Housewives, teen moms, geriatric moms, people who have sex with inanimate objects — I'll watch them all, as long as it's "real." But Project Runway (technically a reality competition show, which makes it higher brow) is legitimately a quality show. The contestants (for the most part) are actually astoundingly talented, the challenges are fresh and exciting, and there's still enough cat fighting and drama to sate my appetite for lowbrow reality crap.

Girls
How did nobody else even mention this show? I don't care what anybody says, Lena Dunham is a genius and remarkably likeable despite airing her flaws — both emotional and physical — for the whole world to gawk at. Sure, the second season didn't quite meet the very high bar that the debut season set — it was a little too dark, and sometimes depressing — but as a 20-something girl myself (29 still counts) I can totally relate to almost everything that is said and done on this show. Don't judge me.

Nathan For You
Most people have probably never seen or even heard of this show. Get familiar, people, because Canadian comedian Nathan Fielder is one of the funniest dudes on the tube right now. This docu-reality comedy series basically features Fielder playing a deadpan, dead-eyed version of himself, using his "business background" to help out failing companies and individuals. Spoiler alert: He is not helpful. Trust me, you've got to watch it.

ALEXANDRA CAVALLO/MWN

Finally, a healthy binge

You could say I'm always a little late to the party. Up until six months ago, I didn't have Netflix, I never watched TV online and I never thought I was missing out. That was until I was introduced to Breaking Bad. I now fully indulge in what is being called binge-tv watching. I have devoured entire series (Family Guy, The Boondocks, American Dad, Episodes, The Walking Dead, to name a few. Yes, a few), and have spent an unacceptable amount of time on my couch. And though I'm nostalgic for the days of looking forward to my favourite show every week, and being left hanging for an entire summer before my shows return, I embrace this new way of enjoying television even if I'm a little late.

MIRIAM OSBORNE/METRO

Metro's picks

1. Breaking Bad comes to an end
2. Toronto Mayor Rob Ford is lampooned on every major late night talk show and Saturday Night Live
3. The murder-filled Red Wedding episode of Game of Thrones shocks viewers not familiar with the book series.
4. Arrested Development returns to TV via Netflix
5. Netflix series House of Cards becomes the first web TV show to receive major Primetime Emmy Award nominations, and goes on to win in three categories.

The shocking Red Wedding episode of Game of Thrones made Metro's list of the best of 2013. HANDOUT

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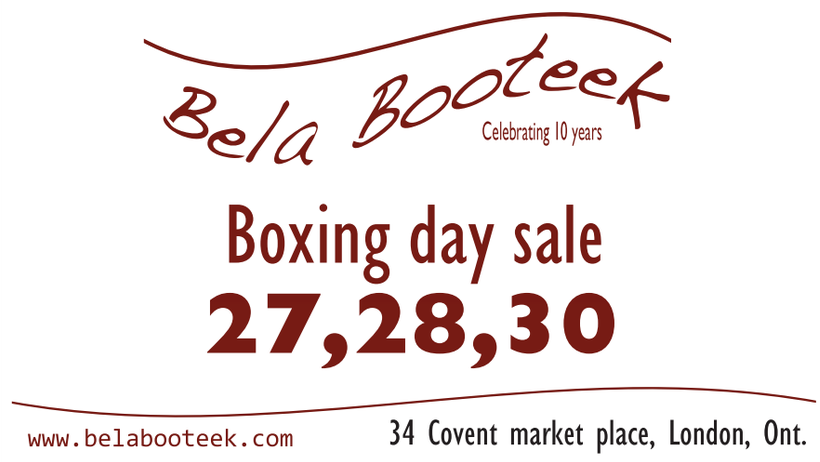


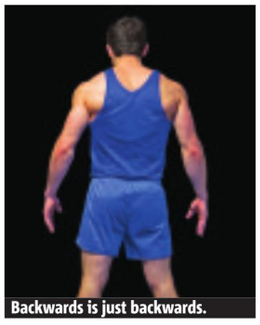
LIFE

The five worst fitness trends of 2013 we hope don't return

Year-end review. Workouts can get boring from time to time but these ideas on how to switch things up missed the mark this year.

VAWN HIMMELSBACH
life@metronews.ca

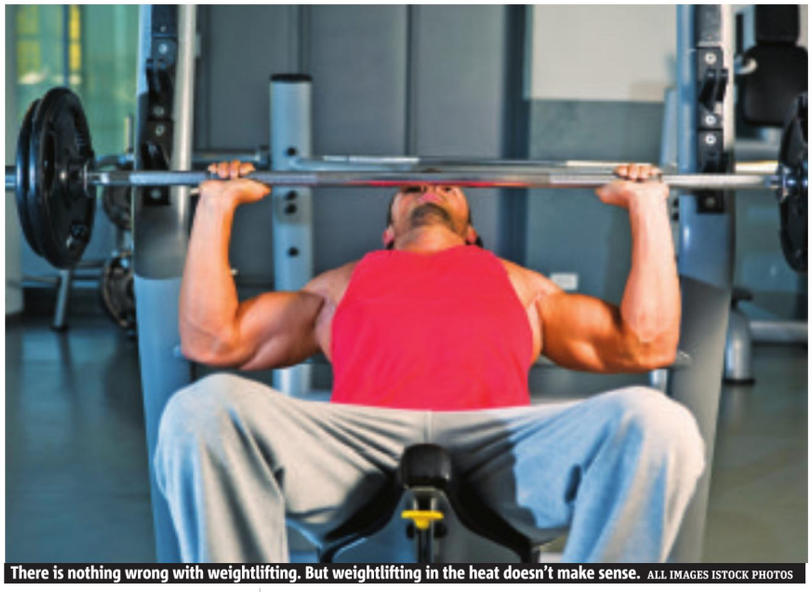
It's not a bad idea to switch up your workout routine every now and then to challenge your muscles and stay motivated. But in the quest for new ways to do old exercises, some trends might be a tad questionable.



Backwards is just backwards.

Backwards running

Sure, running can get monotonous, but is running backwards the answer? There's a reason why people are doing it: According to a study by the U.S. National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, running backwards uses 30 per cent more energy than moving forward at the same speed. And, supposedly, it's easier on your knees. But let's face it; running backwards is an accident waiting to happen since — if it's not obvious — you can't see where you're going. Not to mention it looks ridiculous.



There is nothing wrong with weightlifting. But weightlifting in the heat doesn't make sense. ALL IMAGES ISTOCK PHOTOS

Boutique/hybrid yoga

If you're into yoga, there are a variety of styles to suit your personality, from ashtanga to moksha to yin. But now, you can mix those warrior poses with … hula-hoops, trampolines and martial-arts kicks. Or do yoga on a paddleboard, to disco music or even with your dog (doga). But yoga isn't about total body sculpting or getting a cardio workout — it's about quieting your mind. And it's hard to quiet your mind while doing disco moves in tree posture.

Extreme HIIT … for average Joes

High-intensity interval training (or HIIT) has many benefits: Bursts of vigorous exercise (think squats and burpees) followed by brief rest periods can burn calories — fast. That's why we've seen the rise of workouts like CrossFit, and the Insanity and P90X DVD series.

Run from this trend.

But along with the increase in popularity of these types of workouts has come an increase in injury, from slipped disks to torn rotator cuffs. According to a recent study published by The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research, 16 per cent of CrossFit participants quit the program due to overuse or injury. At least it's good news for orthopedic surgeons.

Themed runs (that involve barbed wire)

Working out should be fun, and hey, who wouldn't be motivated to run faster when being chased by zombies? While themed workouts from Tough Mudder to colour runs (running through clouds of coloured cornstarch) can be motivating or push you to challenge your endurance, any athletic endeavor that involves wading through ice water under barbed wire or being zapped by live wires is questionable. Perhaps next we'll start seeing live wires attached to treadmills so you'll get zapped if you're not running fast enough.

Hot weightlifting

Traditional weightlifting remains one of the best ways to build muscle. But one of the latest fads takes weightlifting to a new level — pumping iron in the heat. The concept behind Bikram yoga (where the temperature in the room is cranked to 40.6 C with a humidity of 40 per cent) is now being applied to everything from barre to spinning and weightlifting classes. But according to a recent study by the American Council on Exercise, turning up the heat doesn't actually burn extra calories. You just think you are, all the while risking dehydration and even heat stroke. If you like the heat, best to stick to Bikram.

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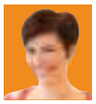
I'll take a cold cerveza with that

Year of Mexican food. You've been fooled long enough with cheesy dishes and store-bought salsa. Authentic Mexican is taking over — olé!



NUTRI-BITES
Theresa Albert
DHN, RNCP
myfriendinfood.com

Mexican has gone beyond the smothered-in-cheese dishes. ISTOCK

Remember when Mexican food meant cookie cutter platters of oddly coloured white rice with a bunch of stuff covered in cheese?

You may have gotten a bowl of pre-fab corn chips and bottled salsa instead of bread as an appetizer.

Luckily, 2013 saw the rise of true Mexican food. It showed up everywhere, from the very hip food truck culture running away with the foodie heart to the top end of just about every urban menu.

Some of the foods that we can't get enough include pulled pork, fish tacos and burritos. And you really haven't lived unless you've found churros with the caramel-like dulce de leche sauce. (Don't forget the side of tequila, which was the beverage of 2013.)

Real Mexican food is wholesome, and it varies across the country from fish-based seaside to tropical fruit interiors, but they all have three things in common: corn, chili peppers and beans. The Europeans added pork, chicken and tomatoes and North Americans topped it all off with some flair.

Taco night is no longer spice from a box mixed with ground beef and corn shells, although, they are certainly retro-welcome. Think broader.

Chicken

Toss a chicken in the slow cooker with one of the many creative jars of salsa on the market and cook all day. Pull chicken from the bones and serve with tostadas, artisan corn and wheat tortillas plus toppings like frozen corn simply roasted on a cookie sheet in the oven.

Cole Slaw

Think about a grated cole slaw mix instead of shredded lettuce. Top with cocoa nibs, any manner of chopped chilies and any combo of fresh herbs. Serve with fresh lime juice and soda water with muddled mint (go ahead add some tequila!)

Pulled Pork

Pulled pork couldn't be easier. The low and slow oven versions create the best melt in your mouth recipes. Sauce options run the gamut from barbecue sauce to the chocolate and chili based mole sauce. This one pot wonder is the best crowd pleaser to come out of this Mexican trend. Pork shoulder or arm is an affordable (if fatty) cut that can't be ruined as long as you keep the oven temperature below 300 and the time at least an hour per pound.

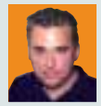
Churro Dip

Since churros are hard to find, must be fresh and deep frying is a pain (not to mention crazy unhealthy!)

Why not go with the classic churro dip: dulce de leche and forgo the donut? This sweet milk caramel sauce can be now purchased jarred but the quickie cheater recipe using only sweetened, condensed milk is ridiculously easy. Use it to drizzle onto vanilla pudding, fresh fruit or chocolate cookies and you are right on the Mexican trend. Which will, by the way, continue for a few more years... **THERESA ALBERT IS A FOOD COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST AND TORONTO PERSONAL NUTRITIONIST. SHE IS @THERESAALBERT ON TWITTER AND FOUND DAILY AT WWW.MYFRIENDINFOOD.COM**

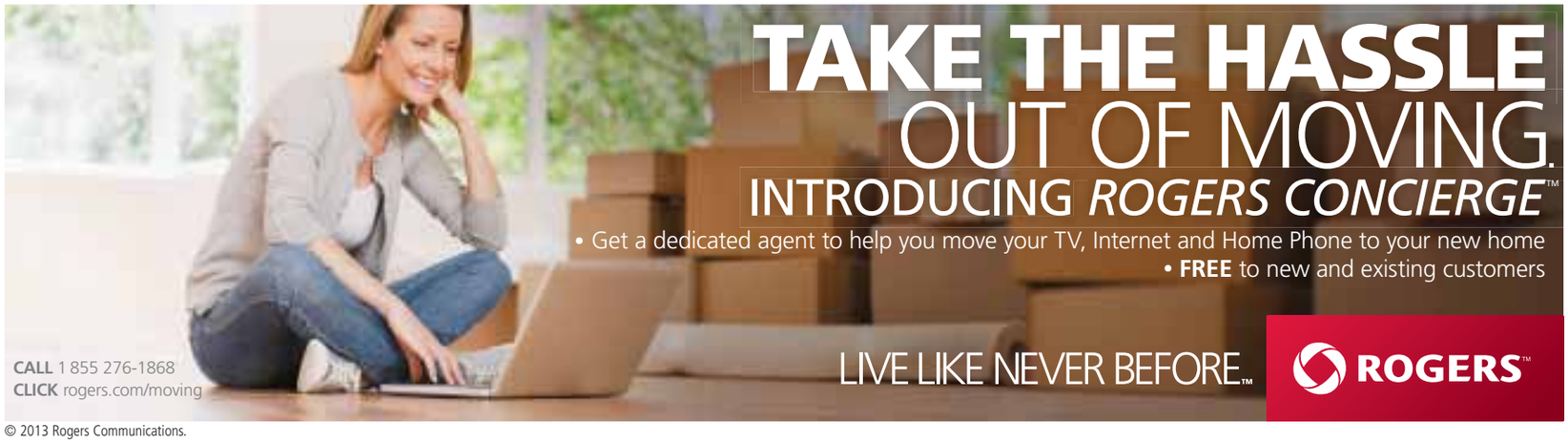
Wine of the Year

2011 Vintage Port



LIQUID ASSETS
Peter Rockwell
@therealwineguy
liquidassets@eastlink.ca

"I'm loading up on 2011 Vintage Port," says Peter Rockwell, Metro's expert for all things liquid. "Considered one of the best years in decades; all the big houses released a version this year. Dow's 2011 ($79.49) is spectacular; and will age well into 2063."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Sports It was a highly successful year for London. Here are some items from the local sports scene that injected us with pride.

Reporter's interview turns sweet with Sugar

DAVE LANGFORD
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Lightning coach Micheal Ray Richardson has a passionate sideline chat with Marvin Phillips during a game at Budweiser Gardens. ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

On the web

Micheal Ray Richardson is featured in Overtime, a weekly online video, alongside Dave Langford on metronews.ca.

The assignment was clear.

We needed a profile of the London Lightning head coach. After all, a 16-page season preview on the two-time defending National Basketball League of Canada champions needed a look at the head coach, no matter who he — or she — was.

But in this case, the head coach was not just any head coach. It was Micheal Ray Richardson.

Yes, that Micheal Ray Richardson!

I suspect there is only one. Certainly only one with such a deep — and sometimes dark — relationship with the game of basketball. And in all likelihood only one that spells Micheal that way.

So a breakfast meeting was planned with Micheal Ray — using first name here in the spirit of establishing the relationship — and Lightning general manager Taylor Brown. It was at the Family Circle, and the name of the restaurant nicely fitting in with the Lightning management team relationship that also includes team owner Vito Frijia.

They are a family, and Micheal Ray is an integral part of it.

So after a healthy breakfast of bacon, eggs, coffee, tea and a series of one-liners back and forth with the staff, the voice recorder came out and the interview began.

There were no notes taken and no questions prepared in advance. I just wanted to know more about the man they call Sugar and his relationship with the NBA, commissioner David Stern, the Lightning management and the City of London.

He could not have been more forthcoming.

(A quick resumé: He was selected fourth overall in the 1978 draft, a four-time NBA all-star drafted two spots ahead of Larry Bird, a veteran of eight seasons in the NBA and ultimately banned for life after three positive drug tests.)

Talking the talk

"The Micheal Ray I sat with that day was engaging, funny, candid, charming and very friendly."

The interview included how he was hired, how the fences were mended with Stern, his love for London, his thoughts on the strange new Canadian league … and his relationship with God.

"He (Stern) doesn't know it, but he probably saved my life," Micheal Ray said candidly about a relationship that went from adversarial to so friendly that they now have each other's personal cell numbers.

The interview lasted about 30 minutes, but I could have sat there all day. There was so much more, but I knew I only had a finite amount of space, similar to the situation I now face with this story.

The Micheal Ray I sat with that day was engaging, funny, candid, charming and very friendly.

And after the story appeared a week or so later, he called me that day and thanked me.

That was unusual in this industry, but that, too, is Micheal Ray.

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The past year has produced a number of triumphs for London teams and athletes, with the following grabbing our attention above all the others:

DAVE LANGFORD/METRO

1 Warner wins bronze at worlds

In August, London decathlete Damian Warner had a personal best in winning the bronze medal at the world track and field championships, before 40,000 spectators in Moscow. The winner of the decathlon, whether it be the world championships or the Olympics, is considered the world's best athlete.

Damian Warner GETTY IMAGES

2 Knights win 2nd straight OHL title

In May, in perhaps the most dramatic game played in London Knights history, Bo Horvat scored a goal at the final buzzer to defeat the Barrie Colts 3-2 in Game 7 of the Ontario Hockey League final. The Knights had trailed three games to one in the series. There was concern whether the goal would count and it took a video review before the Knights won the game and the championship.

The Knights captured their second consecutive Robertson Cup. OHL IMAGES

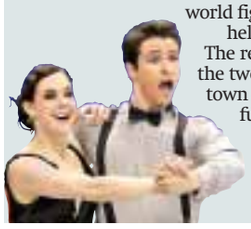
3 Lightning capture 2nd consecutive Canadian title

The Lightning successfully defended their first championship. JOURNAL PIONEER

In April, the London Lightning won their second straight National Basketball League of Canada championship in as many seasons, but they had to go to Summerside, P.E.I., to do so. They defeated the Summerside Storm 87-80 to win the best-of-five final in four games.

4 Skating duo wins silver on home ice

In March, ice dancers Scott Moir of Ilderton, Ont., and Tessa Virtue of London won the silver medal at the world figure skating championships held at the Budweiser Gardens. The result, while disappointing to the two skaters, thrilled the hometown crowd at the highly successful championships. It was the first time the worlds had ever been held in London.



Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir GETTY IMAGES

London's top 5 sports stories of the year

5 London to host Memorial Cup for the 2nd time

CONTRIBUTED

In May and one day after winning the OHL title, the Knights and the City of London were awarded the rights to the 2014 Memorial Cup, beating out Barrie and Windsor for the honour. It will be the second time in history the tournament will be held in London. In 2005, Corey Perry and the Knights beat Sidney Crosby and the Rimouski Oceanic to win the title in London.

NEXT HOME GAME

VS. MISSISSAUGA POWER

Sunday
Dec. 29th @ 2pm

Kids day, doors open at 11:30am
for fun basketball activities.

VS. WINDSOR EXPRESS

Wednesday
Jan. 1st @ 2pm

New Years Day
starts in a big way!

lightningbasketball.ca

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ROAD TO THE THREE PEAT

Budweiser GARDENS

Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
You are on the threshold of a spectacular breakthrough. Which only goes to show that when you focus on a goal and follow up on it consistently, you can be a success. But don't get too full of yourself.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You need a change of direction and the planets will see that you get it. But don't worry. You will like what the next few weeks bring your way very much indeed.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
You are who you are for a reason. If you stop wasting time fantasizing about who you would like to be and focus on doing a better job of who you are, you will soon be both successful and happy.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Your problems are not as bad as you think, so quit worrying. Cosmic activity in your opposite sign of Capricorn will bring relationship matters to a head over the weeks, but there is no need to panic. You'll survive.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
You may be tempted to change something that has worked for years, but is that a good idea? There is every possibility that you will go too far and change things in a revolutionary rather than an evolutionary way.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Play to your strengths and don't let what others are doing affect you in any way. There are some things you do better than most and those are the things you should be focusing on.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
If you have been taking a loved one for granted, this could be a tricky day. Somehow you need to convince them that your feelings are still the same but it will take more than just words.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Something important is about to happen and chances are you will enjoy it. Most likely it will have something to do with your social life, so get out into the world and smile big!

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
You may come into money over the next few days but it would be wrong to count on it to get you out of trouble. The only way you are going to improve your financial situation is to cut back on your commitments.

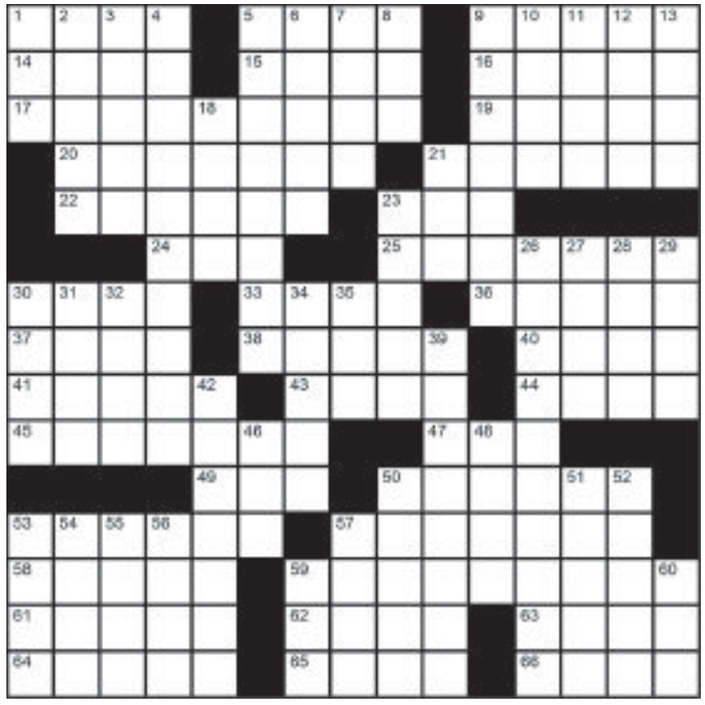
♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
As cosmic activity in your sign reaches a peak over the new year period, you'll have to deal with situations that in the past you've tried to avoid. The good news is solutions can be found, but you've got to act now.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
If your present approach to a problem is not working then clearly you need to tackle it from a different angle. Some people say you're too inflexible, too set in your ways to change. Prove them wrong.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Pay attention to what loved ones tell you over the next 24 hours because they can see something that you missed. If you listen to what they say and act on their advice, it could save you trouble. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

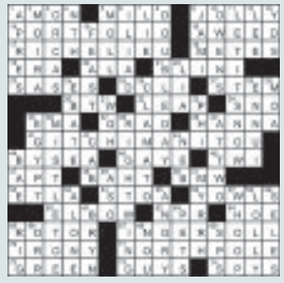
See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Pasta, e.g.
5. 17th Greek letters
9. Mother-of-pearl
14. __ code
15. Nobleman
16. Once more
17. December 26th significance: 2 wds.
19. Rene of movies
20. Be drifting alone at sea ...but suddenly become joyful!: 2 wds.
21. Slightly adjusts
22. Accompaniment
23. Musical fifth note, variantly
24. Exclaimed "That hurts!", say
25. Shopping: Door-__ special
30. George Michael's '80s group!
33. Architect Mr. Saarinen
36. France's longest river
37. Rush
38. Pilotless aircraft
40. Gift Tag: To and __
41. Nimbi
43. Prince of Wales' motto, Ich __ (I Serve)
44. Dick Tracy's beloved, __ Trueheart
45. '50s TV series about a Quebec family, "La famille __"
47. Best, __-rated
49. Fee-fi-fo-__
50. North or South, in The States
53. Neil Young song: 2 wds.
57. Subscriber's extension
58. Wickerworker's willow
59. Traditional pudding of Newfoundland: 2 wds.
61. Billy Bob Thornton flick, "The Man Who __ There" (2001)
62. 'Myth' suffix
63. National Velvet author Ms. Bagnold
64. Tiffs
65. Foundation
66. Lines of travel, for short

Down
1. Taxi
2. Sprang up
3. T. __ (Some dinosaurs)
4. __-__, Quebec (Former PM Brian Mulroney's birthplace)
5. Viewed as
6. "In case you __ noticed..."
7. Toward the mouth
8. Slick
9. Arctic whale having a spiral tusk
10. Chill
11. House, in Havana
12. Board game
13. Biblical grandson
18. Sugar substitute, Sweet'_ __
21. Maple Leafs, on scoreboards
23. Elegant biscuit
26. Ski slope surface sometimes: 2 wds.
27. Contract
28. God of love in Greek mythology
29. Sleep stages, commonly
30. Gift __
31. Transport stuff
32. Prefix to 'phobia' (Fear of heights)
34. Canadian fashion designer Mr. Morali-oglu
35. French queen's mate
39. Mire
42. Attempts
46. Amusing
48. __-dokey
50. Manet painting contemporary
51. Razz
52. 1966 Michael Caine film
53. Awesomenesses!
54. Office request [acronym]
55. Marge's daughter
56. Prince Michael of __ (Queen Elizabeth's cousin)
57 Costa __
59. Taradiddle
60. Hose-using rescue units, for short

Dec. 24th's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

Dec. 24's Sudoku

3	9	1	7	8	4	2	6	5
8	2	7	5	3	6	4	1	9
5	6	4	2	9	1	3	8	7
1	7	5	3	6	2	9	4	8
6	8	9	1	4	7	5	2	3
4	3	2	9	5	8	1	7	6
2	5	8	4	7	9	6	3	1
7	1	3	6	2	5	8	9	4
9	4	6	8	1	3	7	5	2

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